

# North Chicago VA News



VA Great Lakes  
Health Care System  
VISN 12

North Chicago  
VA Medical Center  
3001 Green Bay Road  
North Chicago, Illinois 60064

April 2005

## VAVS VOLUNTEER AWARDS



*Volunteer Lou Ellison works up an appetite before the banquet!*

North Chicago VA Volunteers got to “Come To The Islands” on April 14th at the Country Squire Restaurant in Grayslake, where over three hundred volunteers, guests and staff were in attendance at the 2005 Annual Volunteer Awards Program. The group, “Barefoot Hawaiian”, of Des Plaines, entertained the audience with Hawaiian dances. The dancers even got some of our volunteers to shake it around a little.

The volunteers were honored with awards for their many hours of devotion and dedication to our veterans. Acclaiming top honors again was Dorothy Waters, Wilmette, who was presented a special crystal pineapple award for 52,000 hours and 52 years of service. Other prestigious VAVS awards followed with Jerry Vleck, Grayslake, who received a 17,500

hour outstanding service plate; Jean Keehn, Libertyville, a 15,000 hour medallion award; Floyd Eubanks, Jr., Waukegan, a 12,500 hour pyramid award; Roy Burns, Waukegan, and Otis Norsworthy, North Chicago, a 10,000 hour bowl award, and Thalia Sipple, Gurnee, and John R. Wass, Lake Forest, both received a 7,500 hour plaque award. Also, a 4,000 hour Presidential Award borne from President Bush’s initiative encouraging all Americans to serve volunteer hours to community and country was presented to Michael Hiley Other volunteer awards ranged from 6,250 hours to 50 hours.

The National theme “Volunteers Inspire By Example” couldn’t be

truer of our VA volunteers. Congratulations and a special thank you to each and every volunteer for your service to our Nation’s veterans.



*Marianne Semrad Associate Director awarding Jerry Vleck outstanding service plate.*

## DOCTOR’S DAY CELEBRATION

VA North Chicago celebrated Doctor’s Day on March 24, 2005. The celebration centered on the theme “VA Doctors, A Legacy of Care”. A reception to celebrate and thank our doctors, dentists, residents and podiatrists was held in Building 134. The Canteen provided a

wonderful buffet of a variety of salads and sandwich wraps. The event was well attended and all had a great time. Cake was served after the luncheon for the awards ceremony. Dr. Hassan, Chief of Staff, and Mr. Sullivan, Medical Center Director, presented certificates of award to Dr. V. Chowdary Jampala, Leader, Mental Health Teams, for “Distinguished Physician”, Dr. Raul Gazmuri, for “Excellence in Research”, Dr. Ioana Sandu, for “Excellence in Education”, and Dr.



*Dr. Xanthopoulos cuts the cake while Dr. Jampala and Dr. Sandu look on.*

John Xanthopoulos for “Clinical Excellence”. After the awards were given, Dr. Hassan, on behalf of all physicians, presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Mr. Sullivan for his support and dedication to providing the best possible care to our veterans.

A special thanks to the staff that helped make this event successful, and thanks to all of our VA doctors – they truly are proud to care!

### North Chicago News

North Chicago News is published for staff and volunteers of the North Chicago VA Medical Center. Submissions can be sent to [douglas.shouse@med.va.gov](mailto:douglas.shouse@med.va.gov)

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## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

One of our Medical Center goals is to provide outstanding 'customer service' to our external and internal customers. Everything we do begins and ends with our patients and our staff. In May 2004, we began our Promise Kept—"Proud to Care". This phrase is a way of describing what we are all about at North Chicago VA Medical Center and what our patients, customers and fellow staff can expect from us. Pride in everything we do.

We always want to promote outstanding customer service and one of the initiatives put forth in doing that has been our "On The Spot Superior Customer Assistance Recognition (OSCAR)" and WOW Awards. The OSCAR program is intended to timely recognize and reinforce staff member's contribution towards customer service. This contribution could be providing excellent customer service to a patient, family member, visitor, as well as an internal customer (your coworker). In other words, if you see a coworker providing exceptional customer service to another individual, you should recognize that employee. The WOW recipient recognizes standout OSCAR award recipients on a monthly basis. Since the OSCAR program began in June 2004, we have recognized 183 staff!!! Congratulations and thank you to everyone that has received

an OSCAR or WOW award. Special thanks for those of you who took the time to recognize, write-up and thank one of our fellow staff members who provided excellent customer service.

Your participation in this program is vital and the key to its success. So when you see exceptional customer service, what better way to recognize a coworker and show we all are "Proud to Care"? This is just a small way for all of us to say, "Thanks for doing a great job!"

For a step-by-step instruction on how to nominate someone for an OSCAR Award, go to our North Chicago VA Medical Center homepage and on the upper right side of the screen, select the arrow for the drop down box. Chose "The Oscars". Enter your first name, last name and last 4 of your social security number and select "NEXT". Put in the employee you observed and the action taken, then select "SUBMIT".

Be on the look out for exceptional customer service to patients, family members, visitors or coworkers. Let your fellow staff members know you appreciate what they do for North Chicago VA Medical Center by recognizing them with a thank you and submitting them for an OSCAR award.



## NEW CHIEF ER



Chief of our new Emergency Medical Service. Prior to his appointment here, Dr. Olszyk was employed with the Associated ER Physicians of Burlington, Wisconsin. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1991 through 2003, earning the rank of LCDR. While stationed at the Great Lakes Naval Hospital, Dr. Olszyk was the Department Head of the Emergency Medical Department. Dr. Olszyk received his BA degree in Biology from Rutgers University in 1991, MD from Columbia University in 1995, and is currently pursuing his MBA in Business from the University of Phoenix.

Association memberships include the American Academy of Emergency Medicine and the American College of Emergency Medicine. Dr. Olszyk brings with him a wealth of ER knowledge that

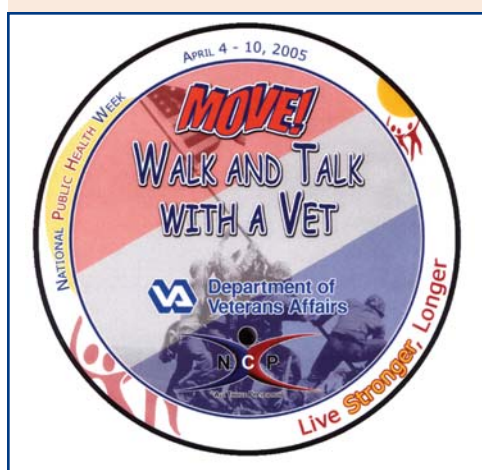
A new member joins our staff as we venture into another dimension of healthcare offered at the North Chicago VAMC. A warm welcome is extended to Dr. Mark Olszyk,

## WALK & TALK WITH VET

April 4-10, 2005 was recognized as National Public Health Week with attention being focused on the issue of empowering Americans to Live Stronger and Longer. This year, VHA sponsored an activity that models health behavior through increased physical activity for all Americans to follow especially veterans and their families.

The North Chicago VA Medical Center staff celebrated National Public Health Week by holding a "Walk and Talk with a Vet" event on Friday, April 8, 2005. Forty seven employees participated and were paired with 23 veterans from MHO Units and 24 veterans from SGRC/IMS units. Employees were encouraged to talk with their partner about their experiences in the military and to share one "healthy living" tip. Certificates of Participation were given to both the employees and the veterans.

A staff member stated, "This is absolutely a dynamite idea. It helps us exercise and gives these patients a wonderful chance to get outside and to feel special." Plans are being developed by the Employee Wellness Committee to continue "Walk and Talk with a Vet" events throughout the spring/summer months. Interested employees are asked to watch for additional information.



will benefit our patients and this medical center. Dr. Olszyk and his wife, Maryellen, are expecting their first children – yes, twins. Congratulations to Dr. and Mrs. Olszyk on the upcoming arrivals! Hobbies include history and boatbuilding. Dr. Olszyk is excited about leading the integration of VA and Navy emergency medical systems into a combined federal system that will see approximately 30,000 patients a year in a new state of the art facility



# JOINT RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

150 researchers from North Chicago VA Medical Center, Hines VA, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, the Naval Hospital Great Lakes, the Naval Institute for Dental and Biomedical Research met on Friday March 25 to share results of current research studies and to look for common areas of interest to stimulate further research efforts. Congressman Mark Kirk, 10th District U.S. House of Representatives addressed the group and urged them to combine their resources to advance research efforts that are needed to produce innovations in treatment and improved quality of health care for present and future generations. Dr. K. Michael Welch, President of Rosalind Franklin University, delivered a keynote address highlighting the untapped potential represented by the combined university and hospital resources of the symposium co-

sponsors.

There were 18 invited speakers and 50 poster presentations describing current research efforts in imaging, podiatry, immunology, dental care, cell biology, nutrition and other areas of healthcare research. The symposium was the first of its' kind in the Lake County area to bring together researchers from the diverse organization that makes up the Lake County Health Care System including the Navy and VA health systems. The organizers are



*Congressman Kirk urges researchers to combine their resources.*

hopeful that the symposium will produce a new era of research collaboration combining the unique research resources of each of the sponsoring organizations.

## WELLNESS FAIR

**SPRING INTO HEALTH!** The 2nd annual All Employee Wellness Fair was held on Tuesday March 22, 2005, throughout the entire wing of 134-1C. Once again, the fair had an excellent attendance with this year expanding the invitation to retirees! A wealth of information was available for all employees to take away with them. New and exciting informative and interactive booths were added this year. The "circuit room" allowed the employee to gain knowledge on his or her height and weight, pulse oximetry, spirometry, blood pressure, blood glucose, and BMI. They were then given the opportunity to have a back

Charities Elder Abuse, A Safe Place, and Lake County Against Sexual Assault all had representatives present, providing information on the individual services. The contact information is available in the Employee Health Clinic.

North Chicago employees had the honor of having Dr. Arthur Hoffman,

Director for Partnership for Prevention, an outreach program for people who smoke, at Rush Medical Center, present an outstanding lecture. Dr. Hoffman presented "Stress Reduction and Relaxation Through Moment by Moment Awareness: A Taste of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction". The consensus was unanimous by all who attended, that the information and techniques were helpful and many were excited to adapt them into their daily lives.

Statistics gathered at the Fair were compared to last year's results. Averages for employee blood pressure and blood glucose had decreased when compared to 2004, which is excellent news and a sign that we are on the right track! However, North Chicago employees continue to be overweight and at high risk for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and hypertension. Professional staff members and Medical Center Leadership are committed to assist staff in improving their health and



*Chacko George performs a pulmonary function test on volunteer.*



*Kathy Weirich, Patient Services, stops to get her blood pressure checked.*

evaluation by a licensed chiropractor, gain information on alternative medicine choices including Acupuncture and Acupressure. Those who participated in the circuit room were given documentation of their results, tips on healthy living and clinic staff was present to discuss lifestyle changes and appropriate follow-up.

In addition to the expanded circuit room, the Wellness Committee invited community social services. Catholic

fitness. Statistics show that if employees are more fit physically they are more productive at their jobs, less on-the-job injuries occur, absenteeism is lowered and the overall workplace environment and morale is improved.

The Employee Wellness Program Committee has several program options to improve the health of the North Chicago VA employee. For further information about the Wellness Program go to the North Chicago Homepage and select the "Employee Wellness Program" link.

Medical Center Leadership would like to extend their thanks and appreciation to all staff that contributed to the planning and execution of the Wellness Fair. It was a resounding success and would not have been so without the wonderful creative participation of so many!! This was truly a medical center wide initiative where staff members from all across the medical center came together for the good of their fellow co-workers!





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## FOOD DRIVE



For the second year, the employees of the Patient Financial Services Department at the Madison VA wanted to do a food drive for needy veterans and their families. Sixty

employees decorated food baskets and collected over \$1,300.00 worth of food items. They chose to share these items with the North Chicago VA and delivered large baskets for

14 needy veterans and their families. Pictured are PFS staff from left to right: Corina Bianchetti, Tracy Thiede, Ralph Geigner, Kathie Kaus, Kathleen Beld, Robert Owens, Tom Matteson, Arlene Dresen, Terry Scott, Lucy Mullikin and Kari Hauger with the overflowing bounty of food.

The baskets were received by our veterans with awe and amazement. They were genuinely and deeply thankful and in many cases had tears in their eyes. We salute the employees of Patient Financial Services at the Madison VA for the huge enthusiasm they showed in doing this project and for sharing it with our veterans. You are commended for your heartfelt giving that touched the lives of so many. You truly made a difference.

## BLOOD DONOR PROCESSING CENTER OFFICIALLY OPENS



*Pictured left to right: Cutting the ribbon to the new Midwest Blood Donor Processing Center is Mr. Sullivan; Renee Oshinski, Acting VISN 12 Director; Captain Michael Anderson, CO, NHGL; and Lt. Michael Roth, head of the center. Photo courtesy HMI Dwayne Snader, NHGL.*

The Midwest Blood Donor Processing Center was officially opened at a ribbon cutting ceremony held on March 25. The center is located in our lab in the basement of

Lakes (NHGL). Captain Anderson added, "This center provides blood to DoD and the local community. This is not just a labor of love, it is

the clinical addition. Fifteen military and civilian staff work in the center, which provides blood to operational theaters abroad and to other Department of Defense (DoD) facilities.

"This is a state of the art lab," says Captain Michael Anderson, Commanding Officer, Naval Hospital Great

a labor of necessity for individuals who require blood, not only here in the United States but also in the theaters of operation where one-third of our blood products go. Without the help of Mr. Sullivan, we would not be here today."

"This is an important occasion," says Patrick Sullivan, Medical Center Director at North Chicago VAMC. "This is a new home for the Midwest Blood Processing Center. We congratulate those who are doing this important work."

The center actually moved between October and December 2004. "It happened without missing a single unit," Captain Anderson said. "All local community and critical units around the world were covered and we all should salute department personnel for the superior work they have done."